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July 29, 1970

To: Surgeon General Jesse L. Steinfeld
From: Congressman Tim Lee Carter

Dear Jesse:

I have received your ~~slow~~ July 10 reply to my letter to you of May 19 concerning the Auerbach-Hammond smoking dog study. As you can imagine, I was shocked and disappointed to learn that in your letter of June 12 to ~~Dr. Jonathan E. Rhoads, President of~~ the American Cancer Society, which its news bureau promptly released to the press, you gave an unqualified endorsement to the validity of the study, based on nothing more tangible than hearsay reports of the findings and your own strong ~~convictions~~ feelings about ~~cigarette~~ smoking and health. This seems to have been an irresponsible act on your part and not in keeping with the scientific objectivity which should accompany your high office. As your ~~secretary~~ anticipated, the news bureau of the ACS promptly released your letter to the press in an attempt to bolster its position with the prestige of your office. As

As I told you in my letter of May 19, serious questions about the validity of this study had been raised by a distinguished pathologist whose letter I forwarded to you. You may by now have seen the enclosed article from the Wall Street Journal of July 8, ~~which~~ This reports that twelve independent authorities ~~who~~ reviewed the ~~manuscripts~~ Auerbach-Hammond data submitted for publication to the Journal of the American Medical Association, ~~have found them unacceptable.~~ ~~found~~ These independent scientific authorities found the Auerbach-Hammond study unacceptable. In view of The article reports that this unusually large

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the judgment you have pronounced, the integrity of your office requires you to make every effort to determine what criticisms ~~these~~ the JAMA independent reviewers made of the study and to ~~amend the comments which you made to the American Cancer Society in your letter of June 12~~ correct the erroneous impression which your letter to the Cancer Society has left with the American public.

When I attended the meeting of the American Medical Association in Chicago on June 22, I learned that the President of the AMA, Dr. Gerald Dorman, had determined from a conversation with the Editor of the Journal of the AMA that the independent reviewers had unanimously recommended rejection of the article. I believe that Dr. Dorman would confirm that information if you were to inquire.

As a physician among the things that ~~As a physician~~ ~~What~~ particularly disturb me about your letter to ~~Dr. Rhoads~~ the ACS is your insistance that no formal review is necessary to establish the validity of this study in view of (a) its eminent sponsorship (b) the reputation of the investigators and (c) the fact that two scientists in government service had the opportunity to review the data and apparently agreed with the reported findings. As to the last point, it seems you have had some bad advice. ~~Although you were not in a position to know~~ At the time, one of the pathologists whose opinion you relied on, Dr. Raymond Yesner of the

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Veterans Administration, has already become the center of controversy in connection with another research study relating to cigarette smoking. It seems that at a medical meeting Dr. Yesner took the liberty of interpreting certain data from an unpublished study originated by Dr. Alvan Feinstein of Yale. As you will see from the enclosed Letter to the Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Feinstein has publicly contradicted Dr. Yesner's intepretation of that data. You might also have taken account of the fact that Dr. Yesner is employed by the Veterans Administration which was a co-sponsor of the Auerbach-Hammond study. In view of these facts, I think you will agree that your reliance on Dr. Yesner was probably ill-advised.

I think you might also agree that such considerations as the eminent sponsorship of the study and the reputations of the investigators are not proper criteria for judging its validity. The American Cancer Society, as you probably know, has sponsored anti-smoking commercials featuring a movie star who was recently arrested for illegal possession of marijuana.

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The two investigators last February released their findings to the popular press before presenting them to their scientific colleagues, a procedure which is considered highly improper among scientific researchers. I think you might have considered these facts in assessing the "reputations" of the organization and people involved.

As you pointed out in your letter, your Department has the statutory responsibility of reporting to the Congress periodically on the state of scientific research concerning cigarette smoking and health. I fear that your uncritical acceptance of this research is a clear reflection of the superficial and biased manner in which the information which goes into those reports is evaluated. I also believe that your action in this matter casts serious doubt upon the integrity and authority of information issuing from the Public Health Service in regard to the health consequences of smoking, and that my colleagues and the American people should be so advised.

I would be most pleased to have your comments on the observations I have made in this letter.

Sincerely yours,

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